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## THE TEACHING MINISTRY.

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Is our title a misnomer? Is the word "minister" synonymous with "preacher"? The ideal church of the New Testament is one in which each member is fitted by the Holy Spirit for a particular function, or kind of service, for the good of the whole body, and each is performing that function. Prominent among these functions in the New Testament times were those of apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher, evangelist, the two functions of pastor and teacher being apparently closely associated. The apostolic function, as it existed in the apostolic age, ceased with that age, its nearest modern analogue being that of the missionary. To the work of the prophet, who stood forth with his message from God to speak to the people on behalf of God, the work of the modern preacher corresponds most closely. The pastoral function is represented by the pastor as the leader and shepherd of the people, and by all those who join with him in like service. Of the work of the evangelist it is not needful to speak here.

But what has become of the teacher? He has his representatives, no doubt, in the superintendent of the Sunday school and in the teachers who work under his oversight. But what means does the church take to see that it is provided with competent teachers? In the early days of the church, prophets, pastors, evangelists, and teachers alike sprang from the body of the church, and entered upon their work without special training for it. Little by little, under the guidance, as we believe, of the same Spirit that in the beginning gave to the church apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers, it has come to be recognized that, in order to render the service to which they are called, missionaries and pastors and evangelists and preachers must be trained for their work. But by a singular oversight, difficult to account for,

*THE  
DISAPPEARANCE  
OF THE TEACHER*

the teacher, in the sense in which the word is used in the New Testament, has apparently been overlooked. We have trained teachers of mathematics and history and pagan literature in our colleges and academies. We have teachers of the Bible and history and theology in our theological schools. But the religious teachers of the young in the church and Sunday school have been left in large part without training. Our preachers and pastors to whom by eminence we apply the term "minister" have as a rule had some sort of special training for their work; and even in those rare cases in which a man steps at once from some other occupation into preaching and pastoral work he is enabled by the exclusive devotion of himself to his work to be constantly training himself for it. But in how many churches is there found a teacher, or one in charge of the teaching work, who has been trained for it by years of study, or who is enabled to train himself for it by the devotion of his whole time and energy to it? Churches that have but one minister who devotes his whole time to the service of the church demand that he be a good preacher and a good pastor. Who ever asks whether he is a good teacher? In the larger churches in which there are two or more ministers, one of whom assumes special responsibility for the preaching, and the others of whom are engaged in different forms of pastoral service, it is insisted that each shall be fitted for his special work. In how many churches is there also a trained minister engaged in and in charge of the work of teaching? There are a few such, but they are very few.

Is there any justification for this relatively greater emphasis on the preaching and pastoral ministry as compared with the teaching ministry? Certainly not in the New Testament. Certainly not in the needs of the church today. There is no need to underestimate the work of the prophetic and the pastoral ministers in order to set the teaching ministry in its true light. Their work is most important, most divine and helpful; most necessary "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." But is it more important,

*THIS DEPRECIATION OF TEACHING UNJUSTIFIABLE*

more influential on the future of the church and the world, than the teaching of the young, whose ideas of truth are as yet in process of formation, whose characters are still plastic and sensitive, whose future is now in the making? And is this teaching work so much less important than the preaching and shepherding work that, while we rightly demand of the preacher and the pastor that he spend anywhere from two to ten years in preparing for his work, the work of teaching can be committed to men and women, most of whom never spent three months in any special preparation for their work, and whose work is performed under the guidance of a superintendent who is, in the majority of cases, equally innocent of preparation? It is impossible to believe that this state of things is right. One can only marvel that it has been permitted to continue so long.

But what is the remedy? Many teachers are needed in the Sunday school. It is impossible that they should all spend years of study in preparing for their work. True;  
*THE REMEDY* but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility, nor is it unreasonable to demand, that, if not in every church, yet in most churches, there should be one thoroughly trained teacher, who should himself teach, oversee the work of the other teachers, and train them for their work. Such a teaching minister is today a necessity to every well-organized church. And he needs as thorough training for his work as the preacher and the pastor. No work in the church can possibly be more responsible or important than his. Let the teaching of the children and youth be in competent hands, and we may almost cease anxiety as to who does the preaching. If a church can afford to support only one educated minister, then that minister should be just as much a teacher as he is preacher and pastor; he ought to be as thoroughly trained for his teaching as for either of the other departments of his ministry. And if he is thus trained for the teaching work of the church, the Sunday school should be as fully under his oversight and control as the preaching or the pastoral work. If a church is able to maintain a plurality of ministers, it should provide for itself a teaching

minister quite as certainly as a preaching minister, and should insist upon his being equipped for his work with the same insistence with which it demands a good preacher.

But if a church has such a minister, what can he do? In the first place, he can himself give instruction. He can teach the adults of the church in a service specially devoted to this, and the young people in connection with the Society of Christian Endeavor or other like organization, and the teachers of the Sunday school, giving to these latter instruction both in the Bible itself and in principles and methods of teaching. Yet his greater work must be more fundamental than this. It must aim at the conversion of the Sunday school into a genuine educational institution, organized and conducted on sound educational principles. This will involve the construction of a course of study based upon intelligent conceptions of the Bible and broad knowledge of it, as well as upon sound pedagogical principles. Then, by selecting, from among those who are available for the work of teaching, one or more teachers for each year's work included in the curriculum, he can set about the training of these teachers, each for the particular work which he or she is to do. Not that each teacher is to know nothing but the year's work which he or she teaches. To know nothing but this would be to fail of really knowing this. Each teacher should, if possible, have gone through the whole course of study, and in course of time it will be possible to limit the selection of teachers to those who have already done this. But meantime, and even when this is the case, each teacher ought to be specially trained for the particular work assigned to him or her, and so become really competent to do the work thoroughly and well. Thus little by little a body of trained teachers may be built up, each of whom can do competently his own special work. Under the system now generally prevalent this is almost impossible, and is becoming constantly more difficult. We do not forget the noble company of intelligent and able men and women who are giving time, energy, and ability to the teaching of classes in the

*THE WORK OF  
A TEACHING  
MINISTER*

Sunday school. They have wrought nobly and fruitfully. But the most intelligent of them would be foremost in insisting that the system that lays upon a teacher who has had no opportunity for special biblical study the task of teaching the prophecy of Jeremiah today, and six months hence the book of Acts, and the year after Hebrews or Romans, thus demanding knowledge of the whole Bible with no opportunity to know thoroughly any part of it, can only be endured till a better plan can be devised and put into effect.

The two things indispensable to such a better plan are a teaching ministry for the oversight and conduct of the teaching in each church, and an intelligently constructed curriculum of study. Both are so urgently needed that it is difficult to assign to either precedence over the other. The church ought not to have to wait long for either.

*TWO URGENT  
NEEDS OF THE  
SUNDAY SCHOOL*